

## Wedding Ceremony



This is a photograph taken on my wedding day. The thallis is held over our heads. I entered the synagogue with my brother-in-law, the husband of Sara Murat.

As soon as we came to Istanbul, there was a proposition for my older sister Sara. A young man from Samsun (a city on the shores of the Black Sea), his name was Yusuf Murat.

On a day when they come to visit our house, Yakup Murat sees and likes my older sister. At that time, neither my older sister nor I have any dowry (the money given when girls marry). The Murat family is a wealthy family. My older sister accepted her fate and married in the Shishli synagogue

My older sister became the means for my marriage too. Because I married Yakup Murat's brother Mordehay Murat. Sisters became sisters-in-law.

When my brother-in-law's brother Mordehay Murat asked for my hand, he was a prospect approved by the family. For what it's worth, the older brother had married my older sister Sara. I would get to preserve the family ties by agreeing to this marriage, and my mother was going to stay with us.

Mordehay Murat was a handsome young man. He was respectful. Even though later he seemed to be an authoritative father in his relations with his children, he doted on them. His philosophy in life was honesty and living with your principles. He paid a lot of importance to his children's education. He wanted his son to obtain a career and his daughter to study in a foreign school no matter what. When we started this marriage, when I took the first step by getting engaged, I had a condition, we would move into my older sister's house too when we got engaged.

A house with the back rooms overlooking Halich (Golden Horn), linoleum floors and no bathroom. Husband and wife, my mother, myself and my fiance, we started living together.

We were happy, we were truly very happy. 6 months after the engagement, we had the civil marriage, we were living in the same house with my fiance nonetheless, it seemed more proper to

us to be civilly married. I still have no dowry. One morning my fiance got up and took me to the market. We bought black fabric for a coat, green fabric for a coat, black for a dress, green for a dress, blue silk fabric for a nightgown and a nightdress, bed jacket and a lot of other necessities. My fiance paid for all of it and he said to me "this is the payment for a year's worth of work, you worked and you earned it and you bought it".

I was really very happy. According to Georgian traditions, a bride's virginity is important. The mother of the girl waits through the night and without fail sees the bloodied sheets. She takes those sheets home, and offers stuffed grape leaves with yoghurt and sweets made with walnuts to the family (recipes at the end of the interview). The mother-in-law is called, this is called "yuzgorumlulugu" (a present given by the bridegroom to his bride when he has unveiled her for the first time and seen her face). Offering stuffed grape leaves with yoghurt means we delivered our daughter pure. Even though we lived in the same house with my fiance, and even though we had the civil marriage quite a while before the wedding, my mother waited at the door of the bedroom till the morning. And I gave her the sheets. She wanted to see it because we lived in the same house. She wanted to prove that even though we were married civilly, my husband and I did not have a sexual relationship before the wedding. My husband was so respectful that I don't remember him holding my hand once while my mother was present.

When we were married, my older sister, my brother-in-law, my mother, myself and my husband lived in the same house. When the children were born, we couldn't fit in one house any more. My husband and I first moved to Taksim (a neighborhood in central Istanbul). In Taksim, Kazanci Hill, mostly people who came to work from the United States lived. I was very young. My husband's friends said "Mordo, are you crazy? How can you live here, they will hit on your wife. You will have no peace". So we moved to Kurtulush, a short while later. I would wait my husband's arrival on the hill every evening, and take the bags from his hands.